

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FOR: ARA DEPUTY FRANK NCNEIL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT BL

SUBJECT: INITIAL APPROACH OF PEREDA GOVERNMENT

1. I MET INFORMALLY AT THE RESIDENCE LAST EVENING WITH PEREDA REPRESENTATIVE EDWIN TAPIA. TAPIA WAS PEREDA'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER AND WILL NOW BE ONE OF HIS MINISTERS.

2. TAPIA ASKED ME IF I HAD ANY OFFICIAL REACTION YET FROM WASHINGTON TO BOLIVIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT. I TOLD HIM THAT THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE SAYING SATURDAY THAT WE WERE DISAPPOINTED BY THE LATEST TURN OF EVENTS IN BOLIVIA, WHICH SEEMED TO INDICATE AN INTERRUPTION IN THE PROCESS OF RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE, BUT THAT WE HOPED THIS INTERRUPTION WOULD BE TEMPORARY AND THAT IT WOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY REVERSAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS OF THE LAST 8 MONTHS OR SO. BEYOND THAT, I SAID, WE WERE VERY CONCERNED AND WOULD HAVE TO KNOW WHAT THE PLANS OF THE GOVERNMENT WERE WITH REGARD TO THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS BEFORE WE COULD DEFINE OUR POSITION FURTHER.

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3. TAPIA SAID THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET DEVELOPED ITS POSITION FULLY, BUT PEREDA WANTED TO PASS ON THREE CONCEPTS THAT WOULD FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN HIS OBJECTIVES. FIRST, HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY AND OFFER PARTICIPATION TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES. SECOND, HE WOULD OFFER WORKER PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP OF THE

MAJOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES. (HE INTERJECTED THAT ELECTIONS WERE NOT THE ONLY WAY TO "DEMOCRATIZE" SOCIETY.) THIRD, PEREDA WANTED AN OPEN GOVERNMENT AND DID NOT INTEND TO LOCK UP THE OPPOSITION, "OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT." I ASKED TAPIA IF HE THOUGHT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WOULD BUY A PIECE OF A MILITARY GOVERNMENT WHEN THEY HAD DECLINED TO PARTICIPATE IN A DEMOCRATIC COALITION UNDER AN ELECTED, CONGRESSIONAL GOVERNMENT. TAPIA SHRUGGED AND SAID PEREDA WOULD TRY, AT LEAST. REGARDING HIS THIRD POINT, I TOLD TAPIA THAT I UNDERSTOOD THAT 50 POLITICIANS WERE BEING ARRESTED TODAY. HE SAID HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THAT BUT WOULD FIND OUT.

4. I TOLD TAPIA THAT THE INTERRUPTION OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS BY A COUP (A CHARACTERIZATION HE DID NOT CHALLENGE) HAD TO BE A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THE U.S. AND MANY OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, AND THEREFORE, WE WOULD HAVE TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION IN OUR RELATIONSHIP UNTIL WE COULD SEE WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT THIS WAS GOING TO BE. WE COULD NOT CONDONE AN INTERRUPTION OF THE PROCESS ANYMORE THAN WE COULD CONDONE FRAUDULENT ELECTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAD NO DESIRE TO DRIVE A PEREDA GOVERNMENT INTO A CORNER AND TO GIVE IT ANY EXCUSE TO BE A REPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD UNDO THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS BOLIVIA HAD ACHIEVED. IF THIS HAPPEND IT WOULD NOT BE BECAUSE OF US. I ASKED TAPIA IF HE COULD EXPLAIN WHY PEREDA HAD CALLED FOR NEW ELECTIONS ON WEDNESDAY AND LED A COUP ON FRIDAY.

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5. TAPIA SAID HE WAS NOT SURE HE COULD EXPLAIN THIS. HE FELT THAT PEREDA HAD BEEN FORCED INTO THE MOVE CALLING FOR ANNULMENT AND NEW ELECTIONS AND HAD ACCEPTED THIS OUT OF DESPAIR OF FORMING A VIABLE GOVERNMENT. SUBSEQUENTLY, HOWEVER, THE OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT PEREDA HAD RECEIVED FROM THE MILITARY AND CIVILIANS IN SANTA CRUZ AND COCHABAMBA HAD CONVINCED THEM THAT HE DID HAVE THE BAS TO GOVERN AND THAT HE HAD BEEN ROBBED OF HIS VICTORY BY BANZER AND HIS COHORTS.

6. TAPIA THEN LAUNCHED INTO HIS OWN ANALYSIS OF WHAT HAD GONE WRONG. HE READILY ADMITTED THAT THE CENTRAL PROBLEM WAS THAT THE GENERALS WERE READY FOR DEMOCRACY. HE SAID THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE GENERALS IN THE GOVERNMENT WERE AGAINST ELECTIONS RIGHT UP TO THE LAST DAY. A CRITICAL CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN THE DEBACLE, SAID TAPIA, WAS THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE HOW DELICATE THIS MILITARY SUPPORT WAS. THE MILITARY WOULD NEVER HAVE TOLERATED A GOVERNMENT LED BY ANYONE OTHER THAN PEREDA BECAUSE THEY SAW A "TRANSITIONAL" GOVERNMENT BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN RULE AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN AN ACCEPTABLE "RETORNO" PROCESS. BUT THE INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION PARTIES REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THIS AND INSISTED IN GOING FOR BROKE. THE FINAL BLOW WAS HERNAN SILES HUNGER

STRIKE WHICH RECALLED FOR THE MILITARY THEIR HUMILIATION IN THE JANUARY HUNGER STRIKE AND CONVINCED THEM SILES WAS GOING TO GET POWER OR DIE A MARTYR.

7. SOME OF THIS WAS VALID, I SAID, AND I HAD TRIED TO CONVINCE SOME OF THE OPPOSITION LEADERS OF THESE GREY "FACTS OF LIFE," BUT THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT THE FATAL HARDENING OF POSITIONS WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED WITHOUT THE PEREDA FORCES' DISASTROUS AND UNECESSARY MISTAKE IN COMMITTING WIDESPREAD ELECTION RIGGING. TAPIA SHRUGGED AGAIN AND WHINED A LITTLE ABOUT ALL BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS HAVING BEEN SLOPPY, SILES HAVING COMMITTED HIS SHARE OF FRAUD, AND WATERGATE BEING UNECESSARY AS WELL, BUT IT HAPPENED.

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8. TAPIA ASKED WHAT AID THE U.S. HAD PENDING AND WHAT WE WOULD NOW DO. I TOLD TAPIA THAT THE AUTHORIZED, OR VIRTUALLY AUTHORIZED, ASSISTANCE FOR FY 78 THAT HAD NOT BEEN NEGOTIATED OR COMMITTED YET CONSISTED OF 3 AID PROJECTS OF AN UNCERTAIN TOTAL AROUND \$40 MILLION, A HOUSING GUARANTEE OF \$16 MILLION, THE FMS CREDIT OF \$14 MILLION AND SOME SMALL GRANTS, FOR A TOTAL OF ABOUT \$70 MILLION. I HAD NO PRECISE INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS QUESTION, BUT I EXPECTED A REQUEST TO HOLD UP ON ALL OF THIS UNTIL THE CHARACTER OF THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT WAS ESTABLISHED. I PERSONALLY DID NOT SEE HOW E COULD PROCEED WITH NEW AID DECISIONS UNTIL WE HAD FURTHER CLARIFCATION ON THREE QUESTIONS WHICH, FRANKLY, WERE AT THE HEART OF WHY THE U.S. WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN BOLIVIA AT THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY, FIRST, WHAT WERE THE GOVERNMENTS PLANS FOR NEW ELECTIOSN AND DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN GENERAL? SECOND, WHAT WOULD BE THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS WITH REGARD TO TREATMENT OF THE OPPOSITION? AND THIRD, WOULD THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAIN THE PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENERAL THAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED IN BOLIVIA IN THE LAST 8 MONTHS OR SO--MUCH OF IT THE WORK OF GENERAL PEREDA HIMSELF?

9. TAPIA ASKED ME TO GO OVER THESE THREE POINTS AGAIN AND THEN SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO MEET WITH ME AGAIN AROUND MID-WEEK TO RESPOND, SINCE THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WAS NOT YET CLEAR ON ALL THERE POINTS. TAPIA SAID THERE WERE NO PLANS FOR NEW ELECTIONS AT THIS POINT. I SAID IN THAT CASE I WAS GOING TO HAVE AN IM-POSSIBLE TIME GETTING POSITIVE ANSWERS FROM WASHINGTON. TAPIA SAID THERE WAS NOT TIME TO ORGANIZE A STRAIGHT ELECTION IN THE REMAINING MONTHS OF 1978. THE FOLLOWING YEAR, 1979, WAS THE CENTENARY OF THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC AND NEITHER THE MILITARY NOR THE POPULACE WOULD WANT THE TURBULENCE OF AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THIS CRITICAL YEAR. HOW DID I FEEL ABOUT CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1980? I SAID THAT IT WAS NOT MY JOB TO TELL BOLIVIANS WHAT THEIR ELECTION SCHEDULE SHOULD BE. THEY HAD TO WORK OUT
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A SCHEDULE THAT SATISFIED THEIR OWN PEOPLE WHO WE FELT HAD EXPRESSED A PRETTY CLEAR JUDGMENT ON JULY 9 IN FAVOR OF RETURN TO CIVILIAN, ELECTED GOVERNMENT. ALL I COULD SAY WAS THAT IF THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE A CLEAR PUBLIC COMMITMENT AND PLAN TO RENEW THE PROCESS OF RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC RULE THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR NEGATIVE FACTOR IN DECISIONS WE HAD TO MAKE AND IN OUR RELATIONSHIP.

10. FINALLY, I ASKED TAPIA WHERE HERNAN SILES WAS AND WHAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS WERE WITH REGARD TO SILES. AGAIN, TAPIA SAID HE DID NOT KNOW FOR SURE, BUT HE THOUGHT SILES WAS IN HIDING FOR THE MOMENT UNTIL THINGS CLARIFIED. I TOLD HIM WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THIS AS WELL. TAPIA CLAIMED THAT SOME OF SILES SUPPORTERS IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MIR HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN PREPARATIONS FOR ARMED SUBVERSION AND THEREFORE THERE MIGHT BE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TREATMENT OF SILES AND SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS.
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